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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001131

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SUBJECT: BASRA TRIBAL SHAYKH CRITICIZES UR RAID AND
DISCUSSES TRIBAL POLITICS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Michael J. Adler for
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. In an introductory meeting March 28, Shia Independent and Council of Representatives (CoR) member Shaykh Haider Subkhi al-Jurani criticized the March 26 Ur raid and said militias should not be confronted until after the insurgency and terrorism are dealt with. He dismissed the importance of Sunni Arab participation in the government, saying the insurgency did not decrease when Sunnis joined the ITG. He also said that tribal politics may play a more important role in provincial elections.
END SUMMARY

Criticism of March 26 Ur Raid and of Sunni Arab
Participation in New Government

¶12. (C) Shia Independent and CoR member Shaykh Haider Subkhi al-Jurani (List 555 no. 10 in Basrah) told PolOff and PolFSN that the March 26 Ur raid was a very bad event, adding that, even if insurgents were present, they should have been called upon to surrender rather than be killed. He complained that the U.S. initially viewed the Shia as moderate Muslims who have suffered for over 1,400 years and that the Shia entered into a long-term friendship with the U.S. on this basis. As a result, he expressed his surprise that the U.S. is "stabbing the Shia in the back" and taking away the excuses that the Shia leadership has been presenting to the people that the U.S. is still an ally of the Shia. He said the raid will hinder these efforts by Shia leaders.

¶13. (C) Al-Jurani told PolOff that he does not believe in or want militias, adding that they are a source of fear. However, he said there should not be attacks on militias while hotbeds of insurgents and terrorists exist. He asserted that militias arose because of the violence in Iraq and that they mostly consist of people who are just trying to defend themselves. He added that there are Iraqis who consider militias to be an appropriate reaction to the insurgency and terrorism. If the insurgency begins to decrease, the government can be forced to confront the militias. PolOff stressed the importance of the formation of a national unity government that includes all of the major groups in Iraq as way of decreasing the level of violence.

¶14. (C) Al-Jurani expressed his opinion that the insurgency will not decline when Sunni Arabs are in the government. He cited as an example the continued insurgent activity after Sunni Arabs were included in the ITG. PolOff pushed back by saying that, given the substantial Sunni Arab

participation in the December 2005 election, the new Sunni legislators, who have the opportunity to help form a government of national unity, are seen as true representatives of their community. Al-Jurani responded that, despite their participation, Sunni Arab leaders questioned the political process (e.g., election results) and did not come into the negotiations in good faith. He said the Sunni Arabs cannot be considered active partners when they issue provocative statements to enflame the streets. He then said that the Sunnis have militias of their own, some of which consist of terrorists in contrast to Shia militias that exist in the open. PolOff responded by emphasizing that the USG has pushed all sides: (a) Sunni Arabs not to form militias; (b) armed Sunni Arab groups to lay down their arms and participate in the political process or be considered legitimate military targets; and (c) Shia leaders to disband the current militias.

Tribal Politics - Sectarian Interests Prevailed in December, But Hope for Provincial Elections

¶15. (C) Al-Jurani said he was selected as a candidate in the fall of 2004 when he won an election among 500 shaykhs in Khor al-Zubair area in Basrah and then won a follow election among 200 shaykhs in Basrah (supervised by representatives of Ayatollah Sistani and Abdulaziz al-Hakim). He added that, after the formation of the Transitional National Assembly (TNA), tribal shaykhs from all political parties (he estimated there were about fifty) formed a political bloc separate from the tribal affairs committee.

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¶16. (C) Al-Jurani believed he is now the only tribal shaykh in the Shia Coalition now, as opposed to the 15 members previously in the TNA, adding that there may be others who joined as party members but not as tribal shaykhs. He attributed the decrease to the decision by some tribal shaykhs to run as party member, in different lists, or on their own lists in the December election. He added that tribes in Iraq cut across sectarian lines. While the differences between ethnic groups and the concerns over terrorism caused Shia voters to choose the Shia Coalition in the December election, al-Jurani said the tribal shaykhs may do better in provincial elections because the Shia Coalition components will be competing against each other.

¶17. (C) BIONOTES. Shaykh Haider Subkhi al-Jurani is married, with two children. He told PolOff that he had tried to study Semitic languages in college, but did not finish. He said he had no involvement in politics prior to ¶2004.

According to al-Jurani, his brother was arrested during Saddam's regime for being a "religious man".

KHALILZAD